

IRAN

in struggle



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Comrades, Brothers, Sisters, men and women workers of all tendencies, of every organisation throughout the whole world, it is to you that we dedicate this brochure.

From it you will learn about the inhuman repression from which we are suffering and the unrelenting struggle which we are carrying out.

Brothers and Sisters,

We are oppressed by a dictatorial régime on the orders of American imperialism.

Like our brothers in other countries who are suffering the same repression, we have need of your solidarity in our struggles.

We count on your fraternal support.

Liaison Commission of Iranian Trade Unions

The WFTU and its affiliates have also shown solidarity with the struggle of the people and workers of Iran. The Liaison Commission of Iranian Trade Unions would like to express its gratitude for the fraternal help and support which they have never failed in giving to this struggle and wish them increasing success in their noble task.

We send our best wishes to the WFTU in particular on the eve of the 9th World Trade Union Congress which will be the great trade union event of 1978, the work of which will make a precious contribution to the struggle of workers and trade unions throughout the world for a better future of progress, social justice and peace.

IRAN in struggle

For a developing country, Iran has a long trade union tradition. In fact, trade unions first appeared even before the first world war, the first among them being that of the print workers.

After the first world war, the victory of the workers of Tsarist Russia, Iran's neighbour and the creation of the first socialist State strengthened the Iranian workers' struggle.

As early as 1920, Iranian workers put forward the slogan for an 8-hour working day. In 1925, May Day was widely celebrated for the first time by trade unionists.

Meanwhile, the dictatorial régime, established in 1925 with the direct help of British imperialism under the direction of General Ironside, forced the trade union movement to become clandestine.

After the abdication of dictator Reza Shah in favour of his son in 1941, the trade union movement came out of hiding and appeared in all its force since it embraced almost all workers in the major industrial centres such as Teheran, Isfahan, Tabriz, Meched, Abadan, etc...

In 1944, these trade unions, united in order to form a united centre, the Central Council of United Iranian Trade Unions (CCUTU).

We cannot cite here all the struggles and activities carried out by this important centre in the workers' interests, but we will mention a few examples which are particularly significant.

In 1946, after a long struggle the CCUTU won a piece of legislation long desired by workers by obliging the government to pass for the first time a Labour Code which gave them substantial guarantees in respect of wages, social security, working hours, pensions, etc. Also, the CCUTU took part, as the representative of Iranian workers, in the WFTU founding Congress in Paris in 1945.

In 1946, more than 600 workers celebrated May Day under the CCUTU banner.



May Day 1945

In 1950, the CCUTU still active despite the arrest of its leaders and in spite of its semi-legal existence led major strikes of Iranian workers, particularly that of oil workers. In this way, it contributed to the coming of power of Dr. Mossaddegh in 1951 since among its main objectives was the nationalisation of the main resource of the Iranian people — oil, and the ending of the domination exercised by British Petroleum, a concessionary company since 1908.



Popular demonstration of support of the nationalisation of oil in 1951

However, the nationalisation of oil in 1951 and the anti-monopolist position taken by the Mossaddegh government, backed by the workers and people, represented a serious threat to imperialism, particularly for American imperialism. This is why the latter, through the intermediary of the CIA and in collaboration with Iranian reaction, fomented the bloody coup of 1953.

The régime's first act after the coup d'état was to denationalise oil above all to the profit of the American companies. The coup d'état in question had two objectives:

— to safeguard the stranglehold of imperialism on all the country's riches, particularly oil;

— to preserve the strategic base of imperialism represented by Iran, a country which is situated at the crossroads of capitalist Europe, by the Arab countries and Asia in the neighbourhood of the Soviet Union.

Every means was used to win these objectives: bloody repression, massive arrests of patriots, democrats and trade union leaders, torture and assassinations. These measures were, of course, accompanied by the abolition of trade union rights and of democratic rights and liberties in general. Since that date, the CCUTU was outlawed and trade union activities absolutely forbidden.

Today, after 24 years of dictatorship, there are, according to many sources, tens of thousands of political prisoners in Iran. During the last three years alone, more than 200 patriots have been executed according to official sources. This figure obviously does not include the «discrete» assassinations which is a method often used by the régime.

In 1957, in order to maintain and strengthen its repression, the régime, under the direction of CIA experts, created an all-embracing police body, the Savak. Savak now controls all political, social and cultural life in the country.

Whilst carrying on its anti-popular and pro-imperialist policy, the Iranian dictatorship set up a pretended programme of reforms which, since 1962, officially calls itself the White Revolution. It has been forced to resort to this sulterfuge because of the development of forces in the world following the anti-fascist victory in 1945 and the progress of the process of decolonialisation in Third World countries.

The White Revolution in principle had as its objectives agrarian reform, industrialisation and the cultural, scientific and social progress of the country.



«The White Revolution is the liberation of womanhood»

1/ «AGRARIAN REFORM»

After a long so-called preparatory period, this pretended reform came into practice in 1962 and was to finish in 1971.

All in all, 5% of cultivable land was sold to peasants who were more or less well off. The largest proportion of this land was put at the disposal of the agro-industrial corporations whose majority shareholders are former large landowners linked with foreign capitalism.

Presently, about fifteen large companies each own more than 10,000 hectares of land which is exploited to the benefit of transnational corporations, often North American which are associated with Iranian capitalists.

These immense farms are supplied with American or Japanese agricultural machinery.



Rural exodus

The feudal Iranians who couldn't or didn't want to keep their land received compensation in the form of shares in State-run industrial corporations. They are now shareholders in assembly plants created within the framework of the White Revolution.

The various laws passed during the period in question have allowed foreign capitalists to invest in the agricultural and industrial fields.

The Fruits of «Agrarian Reform»

About thirteen years after the beginning of the reform, results are far from brilliant: a general increase in poverty can be noted among peasants and a sizeable decrease in agricultural production due to the bad economic policy of the régime.

Let us look at what the régime's official spokesmen say. The economic revue «Teheran Economist» which is almost the organ of big businessmen, gives the following description of the agricultural situation:

- there is a lack of spare parts for agricultural machinery;
- there is a shortage of repair workshops;
- there is a lack of means of communication between the rural agglomerations;
- there is no law whatsoever concerning the wages of agricultural labourers;
- the competent authorities make no effort to improve the peasants' lot;
- the falling price for agricultural products, because of the so-called open door policy, which encourages foreign agricultural imports, is impoverishing the peasants and devastating rural areas.



The «mechanisation» of work in the fields



Hovels in which the peasants live.

Similar accusations were made in Parliament by the vice-chairman of the Commission for Agrarian Reform.

Thus, after 12 years of agrarian reform, rural areas lie washed, peasants are invading the cities in search of a crust of bread and the national agricultural product is falling drastically in comparison with the period preceeding reform.

These days, Iran imports thousands of millions of dollars worth of fruit, vegetables, meat and cereals every year, whereas in the past there was no need to do this.

* * *

2/ INDUSTRIALISATION

The régime puts out much propaganda to prove that Iran has become an industrialised country.

However, apart from Isfahan steelworks, the machine-tool factories in Tabriz and Arak built by the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia, and a few other smaller enterprises, industrialisation in Iran is more or less limited to the creation of vast assembly plants for western products.

Top of the list are the car, lorry and bus assembly plants set up with the aid and under the control of big western companies (but under a different name). The finished product satisfies neither Iranian nor foreign customers. Spare parts are practically non-existent and repair services are becoming increasingly hard to find.

Statistics show that in 1976 Iran produced 171,000 cars, buses, etc. But during the same period it imported 150,000 cars from western capitalist countries and Japan as Iranian buyers prefer foreign makes because of the poor quality of vehicles produced in Iran. Vehicle exports were down by 46% in 1976 over the previous year.

One must also mention the energy crisis and the scandal created by the big Reza Shah hydro-electric power station in the summer of 1977. As a result



The White Revolution was supposed to bring them well-being



Women workers at the Pars-Toshiba factory.

of corruption in the construction industry to which the Iranian authorities (to whom the western company charged with construction gave bribes) turned a blind eye, this enormous dam which was to have revitalised an industrial area of high population density ceased to function, causing the stoppage of 150 factories and depriving 8 million people of electricity.

Only the oil industry which is almost exclusively in the hands of foreign companies, gains large sums of money for the country (22 thousand million dollars in 1977). Of this sum the régime has spent 5 thousand million dollars per year on buying arms since 1974. It is thanks to this industry that the régime can compensate for its financial deficits, build assembly plants, buy agricultural and food products and clothing and pay three and a half thousand million dollars in pay to 36,000 American officers whose job it is to teach the Iranian army how to handle the sophisticated arms bought from the United States. It is by exploiting the oil reserves that the régime's leaders and their like are able to make themselves increasingly rich whilst the people are getting poorer day by day.

Finally a revealing statistics: Iranian exports (oil excluded) are 27 times less than imports (arms excepted). The USSR is the largest buyer of Iranian products. The United States is the country which sells the most to Iran (arms excluded).

3/ EDUCATION

At present, more than 3 million children of school age, i.e. 70% are without schooling. For the two million children between the ages of 3-5 there are only 165,000 places in nursery schools. The charges for these schools (all of them private) are so high that only children of very fortunate families can go to them. The monthly charge can reach as much as 1,900 dollars.

As a result, there are 1,300,000 working women in Iran whose children are deprived of nursery schooling.

The régime, which resulted from the coup d'état, in «perfecting» the former literacy programme, already 40 years old, has maintained if not increased the percentage of illiterates which still represents 65% (90% in the countryside).

Primary school education is free and compulsory in Iran but only on paper. Two years ago, secondary and higher education also became free again, only on paper. However, State schools are so few in number and teaching in them is so mediocre that parents who have the means prefer to send their children to private schools for very high fees.

Here are a few figures provided by the authorities themselves:

«There are 125,000 high school and university students in Iran, only 3% of whom complete their university studies ... as opposed to 150,000 Iranian students abroad, 23% of whom receive a degree, and of that number over 72% go on to further studies.»

4/ HEALTH

According to official statistics there are 10,000 doctors in Iran — i.e. one doctor per 3,500 inhabitants. 55% of all doctors live in Teheran.

There are 15,000 nurses in the country instead of the 150,000 there ought to be with a population of 35 million. There is one hospital bed for every 3,500 people.

The concentration of doctors and health services in Teheran and 5 or 6 other big towns creates serious problems in the small towns and rural areas. Often, hospitals there close down through lack of staff.

The brain drain, particularly among doctors, has reached considerable proportions. There are more Iranian doctors in the USA than in Iran and the same thing applies in West Germany and Britain.

Rather than going to school
he has to work



5/ CULTURE

«Censorship prevents the progress of culture» it said in the semi-official press in response to complaints from artists, scientists and writers, and under pressure from the masses.

A well-known film director was recently sent to prison for debt. Before he was jailed he told the press, «I have made several films that have been well received by all the critics. I have won prizes at various international film festivals. But I haven't made a penny and now I'm in debt, so they're sending me to prison».

A short while ago, dozens of artists and writers wrote an open letter to the prime minister denouncing censorship as the major reason for the decline in science, letters and the arts.

In Iran, the Savak bans publication and even reading of contemporary works and also some classical authors from the 17th to the 20th centuries — especially J.J. Rousseau (The Social Contract) and Maxim Gorky.

Living and Working Conditions of the Masses

After this appraisal of the White Revolution in various fields, let us have a look at the living and working conditions of the masses.

South of Teheran, in poor suburbs, thousands of workers' families (a total of 500,000 men, women and children) live in hovels dug into former clay pits. Families of 5 to 9 people have to be content with a room of 9 square metres. The majority of these large families possess no more than 3 or 4 worn blankets to keep out the cold. Poverty, hunger, filth and disease rule the roost in these areas. But it is the Teheran winters which reveal the full scope of this misery since they are very severe and consequently very hard for those who have nothing.

What a heart-rending spectacle to see, not far from sumptuous palaces, wretched children, in rags, paddling in half-frozen pools of water.

These children are of school age but their parents haven't the means to send them there. In fact, very often children have to work 10 to 12 hours per day for a wage equivalent to 9p sterling in order to help their family financially.

Wages generally are very low: a qualified metalworker, for example, earns no more than 62.50 to 75,00 pounds sterling per month.

But many earn even less, above all women and children in agriculture and in the factories making the carpets famous for their beauty and also for



Gun democracy

their extremely high price. Working days of 12 and even 14 hours are current practice. This is the case in the coalmines of Shaharoud in the North of Iran, where 12,000 miners work 14 hours per day in extremely difficult conditions and in total insecurity.

In order to give an idea of the purchasing power of wages, we will quote from the semi-official daily «Ettelaat» (November, 1977).

«40 years ago, a worker earned 890 Rials per month (112 Rials = 1.00 pound sterling) and the price of a ton of rice cost 1,000 Rials. Today, this same category of workers earns 8,000 Rials per month and rice costs 100,000 Rials. Meat cost 8 Rials per kilo and bread 1 Rial against 660 and 50 Rials respectively today».

During the last 4 years, prices have risen by 81%. According to official sources, rents presently swallow up more than 60% of workers' incomes.

Less than a third of workers receive benefits or social security. Generally speaking, the laws concerning benefits and social security are in fact not implemented. In order to look after oneself properly, one must pay.

Many jokes are circulating in Iran on this subject. One often says that

something is «as false as a social security card» or «so and so is as friendly as a national health doctor» or even, «if you're not happy you'll be sent to a national health hospital».



A murdered patriot

The trade union movement and the working class movement in general — all trade union activity worthy of the name has been forbidden in Iran since the coup d'état of 1953. The Iranian Workers' Organisation (IWO), founded during the '50s in order to fool world opinion has never been anything else but a branch of the party in power. In fact, as well as the party in question, it depends entirely upon Savak.

Its leaders at top and medium level are appointed by Savak. Also, this so-called trade union organisation is opposed to any movement in support of demands.

However, the régime, Savak, the party and the IWO have not been able, despite bloody repression, to prevent the workers and the working class from demonstrating their existence (presently there are 5 million workers in Iran, 2 million of whom work in production).

Savak carries on its repression relentlessly but the workers do not allow themselves to be intimidated and on the contrary their struggles are intensifying.

Very recently, the «Teheran Economist» violently attacked the workers, writing: «Underground parties (that is to say progressive organisations and above all the Tandeh party — Communist) after their failure in the political field, have widely penetrated the ranks of the workers and employees. This is why we are witnesses to many protest demonstrations and so-called strikes for wage increases».

Last year, faced with these realities, the leaders of the régime, with the help of the Savak and the Minister of Labour, called the IWO Congress mainly in order to appoint leaders who were even more devoted to both the government and employers.

But all these efforts come to nothing and workers unrelentingly continue their struggle.

As a result from 1955 to 1963 big strikes took place mainly in the oil fields: Abadan, Khark, Meched, Soleiman and in the textile industry, the building trade, coal mines, the teaching profession and post office in Isfahan, Shiraz, Recht and elsewhere.

Since 1970, the movement of strikes and protests has grown enormously, involving every branch of production: oil, textiles, transport, building, metallurgy, from North to South, from East to West throughout the country.

It is also important to mention the strikes and demonstrations held by students in every university in Iran.

Very often, peaceful strikes and demonstrations end tragically following

police intervention. But despite this one can say today that the Savak, IWO and the régime in general are being snowed under by the masses in revolt.

During the last 6 months alone (July — December 1977), more than a million workers, students and members of other sections of the population have taken part in mass strikes and demonstrations.

The unrest is such that people such as the President of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and dozens of senators and MPs have warned the authorities against certain «abuses».

The semi-official press, notably the weeklies «Ettelaat» and «Keihan» criticise «those who have profited from the White Revolution».

In order to calm the masses, the Shah carried out a cabinet reshuffle in August 1977. But this demagogic manoeuvre fooled no one and the workers' struggles alongside students and all patriots unceasingly rise in number and size, for decent wages, housing, hospitals and schools, and for democratic and trade union liberties. The workers are demanding the release of thousands of Iranians who are imprisoned and often submitted to torture for the simple reason that they took part in a strike.

These demands are increasingly gaining ground amongst all forces which are of all tendencies and of growing numbers which are rising up against the dictatorship and fighting for democracy.

این خونهای سُرخ
ریخته می شود

تا
نفست
سیاه
بدست
دسته
راهزنان
برسد.



Blood flows so that black gold remains in the hands of the imperialist
monopolies

Published by the Liaison Commission of Iranian Trade Unions.



خونبیا
«طلای
سیاه»